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ABSTRACT

A prevailing common notion regarding fund-raising success in higher education is that institutions with "more" of certain important characteristics achieve higher totals in voluntary support than institutions with "less." The corollary, which also prevails, is that if there are not high levels of these characteristics, the institution cannot expect to acquire high levels of voluntary support. An analysis of fund-raising information was conducted to determine whether high levels of certain institutional characteristics were to be found consistently in institutions with high levels of voluntary support. Institutions selected were among those reporting fund-raising information to the Council for Financial Aid to Education for the years 1982-83 through 1984-85. Public and private institutions of five types (research, doctoral, and comprehensive universities and baccalaureate and two-year colleges) were studied separately, resulting in ten different types of institutions, with a total study group of 575 institutions. Relationships of various institutional characteristics to voluntary support outcomes are depicted in a series of graphs. It was found that the commonly held notion does not appear to be true for all types of institutions with all donor groups and that the more aggregated the data, the more likely it is that evidence can be found supporting the common notion. Important individual differences appear when institutions are disaggregated by type. The importance of the analysis is considered to be its illustration that there are gaps in our understanding of fund-raising effectiveness and that we may be uncertain as to where the gaps are. Contains 14 references. (Author/KM)

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A COMMON NOTION ABOUT FUND RAISING SUCCESS: MYTH OR FACT?

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(This paper is a revision of an earlier working paper, "Relationships of Institutional Characteristics to High, Middle, and Low Levels of Voluntary Support," October, 1987.)

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for Management Research, Policy Analysis, and Planning

This paper was presented at the Twenty-Eighth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix Hotel, Phoenix, Arizona, May 15-18, 1988. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

Teresa Karolewski
Chair and Editor
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ABSTRACT

A prevailing common notion regarding fund raising success in higher education is that institutions with "more" of certain important characteristics achieve higher totals in voluntary support than institutions with "less." The corollary, which also prevails, is that if there are not high levels of these characteristics, the institution cannot expect to acquire high levels of voluntary support.

The use as models of only those well-known institutions with outstanding fund raising records seems to have created this notion -- which has been highly generalized to higher education institutions overall, causing unnecessary pessimism in many institutions.

We sought to determine if high levels of certain institutional characteristics were consistently found in institutions with high levels of voluntary support. The research indicates that this common notion does not appear to be true for all types of institutions with all donor groups and that the more aggregated the data are the more likely we are to find evidence supporting the common notion. Important individual differences appear when institutions are disaggregated by type.

We have recently completed a year-long national study of factors associated with fund raising outcomes in ten types of higher education institutions. (A set of eight working papers and a final report, listed in the references, are available from the authors.)

Although fund raisers know that fund raising success is multiply determined, a prevailing common notion regarding fund raising success in higher education is that institutions with "more" of certain important characteristics achieve higher totals in voluntary support than institutions with "less." The corollary of this notion, which also prevails, is that if there are not high levels of these important characteristics, the institution cannot expect to acquire high levels of voluntary support.

While it is true on the average that wealthier, larger, older, and more prestigious institutions acquire higher levels of voluntary support than institutions with more modest characteristics, the data from other parts of this study, reported elsewhere, indicate that there are numerous exceptions, and also, that there is a wide range of outcomes for total voluntary support and for gifts from separate donor groups for each type of institution. These findings suggest that no institution is automatically excluded, on the basis of its institutional characteristics, from a successsful fund raising effort.

In the absence of empirical models for specific types of institutions, fund raisers have typically looked for standards and guidelines to institutions which are well-known and have the highest figures for voluntary support outcomes. The combination of the two criteria is important since not all well-known institutions have outstanding records in fund raising, and many less well-known institutions do. Using as models only those institutions which meet these criteria has resulted in the

formation of certain beliefs about fund raising success which have been highly generalized to higher education institutions overall. Both research and experience suggest that this generalization may have caused unnecessarily pessimistic attitudes on the parts of development officers, presidents, and trustees, leading to restricted resource allocations and program decisions in many institutions.

As one aspect of this overall research we sought to determine whether higher levels of resources were consistently found in institutions of the same types with higher levels of voluntary support. To do this, we created graphs, which we called profiles, to depict relationships of institutional characteristics to voluntary support outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Institutions

Each year the Council for Financial Aid to Education (CFAE) invites approximately 2,700 colleges and universities to participate in a fund raising survey. Results are printed annually in the report, Voluntary Support of Education. Over the past four years, an average of 1,200 American institutions have responded each year. Although these 1,200 institutions represent only about one-third of the nation's higher education institutions, these institutions nevertheless claim 85% of the estimated annual total dollars in voluntary support to higher education (CFAE, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987). For example, the national estimate of total voluntary support to higher education for 1985-86 was $7.4 billion. The 1,230 institutions responding to the CFAE survey for that year claimed $6.37 billion of that total (CFAE, 1987, p. 4). Therefore, the institutions which respond to the CFAE survey are believed to be representative of all higher education institutions in which fund raising

efforts are significant.

Institutions selected for this research were among those reporting fund raising information to CFAE for the years 1982-83, 1983-84, and 1984-85. Public and private institutions of five types (research, doctoral, and comprehensive universities and baccalaureate and two-year colleges) were studied separately, resulting in ten different types of institutions. The total study group numbered 575, by types and status (private or public) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Institutions by Type and Status

	Status		
Type	Private	Public	Total
Research	27	23	50
Doctoral	24	52	76
Comprehensive	116	66	182
Baccalaureate	192	25	217
Two-year	27	23	50
TOTAL	386	189	575

Variables

Variables used in the analysis reported here were:

1. Outcome Variables: total voluntary support (TVS), total alumni gifts (AG); total non-alumni individual gifts (NG); total corporation gifts (CG); and total foundation gifts (FG).

2. Institutional Characteristics: total institutional educational and general expenditures, called general expenditures throughout the paper (EG), endowment (END); enrollment (ENR); alumni of record (AR); tuition (TUI); age of institution (AGE); and expenditures per student (Q3).

(Alumni of record was excluded as a variable for two-year public colleges. So few institutions of this type report figures for this variable that to eliminate all those not reporting would have made it necessary to eliminate the entire type.)

Data for outcomes and institutional characteristics were collected or derived from published sources. To offset any unusual one-year events, three-year averages were used for all outcome variables, endowment, and general expenditures. Figures reported for 1984-85 were used for enrollment, alumni of record, and tuition. To determine expenditures per student, we divided the three-year average figure for general expenditures by 1984-85 enrollment. Age of institution was determined by subtracting the year the institution was founded from 1986.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profiles

Five profiles (one each based on outcomes for total voluntary support, alumni gifts, non-alumni gifts, corporation gifts, and foundation gifts) were created for each type of institution as well as for all institutions combined, all private institutions, and all public institutions, for a total of 65 profiles.

Data for profiles were generated in the following way: institutions were ranked on the outcome variable from high to low and then divided into three equal sections, representing high, middle, and low levels of outcomes. After calculating the grand total for each variable and the amount for each level, we determined the percentage claimed by each level for each resource and outcome variable. As an example, a portion of the data used to generate the profile for total voluntary support for all institutions is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Profile Data for Total Voluntary Support and Tuition for All Institutions

Level	Voluntary Support Amount	Voluntary Support Percent of Total	Tuition Amount	Tuition Percent of Total
Grand Total	$2,900,000,000	100.0%	$2,800,000	100.0%
High Level	2,500,000,000	86.2%	1,100,000	39.3%
Middle Level	342,800,000	11.8%	1,000,000	35.7%
Low Level	91,300,000	3.1%	700,000	25.0%

Profiles were compared by patterns for high, middle, and low levels of voluntary support; by types of institutions; and by kinds of donors.

Comparisons of Patterns

Identifying patterns. The profiles for all institutions for total voluntary support and for each donor group, shown in Figures 1 through 5, support in a highly dramatic way the common belief about the relationships of institutional characteristics to levels of voluntary support outcomes. Institutions at the high level of voluntary support clearly have the greater portion of the resources indicated by each institutional characteristic. Middle and low groups are also distinct with minimal overlap (for tuition, corporation gifts, Figure 4). These data, without other evidence, provide strong support for the idea that levels of institutional resources are important factors in levels of voluntary support outcomes.

As indicated in the profile for total voluntary support for all institutions (Figure 1) and in Table 2, the top 33% of institutions acquired about 85% of all philanthropic dollars to higher education and also had more than 50% of the combined institutional resources for all

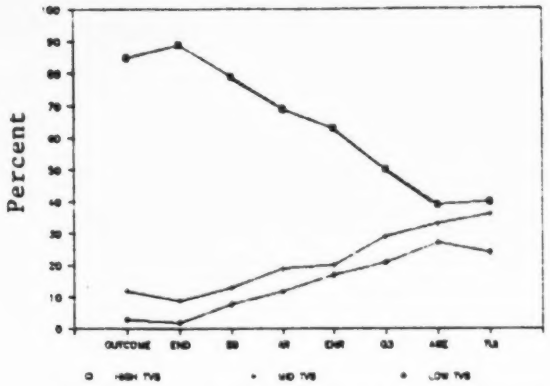

Figure 1. Total Voluntary Support for All Institutions

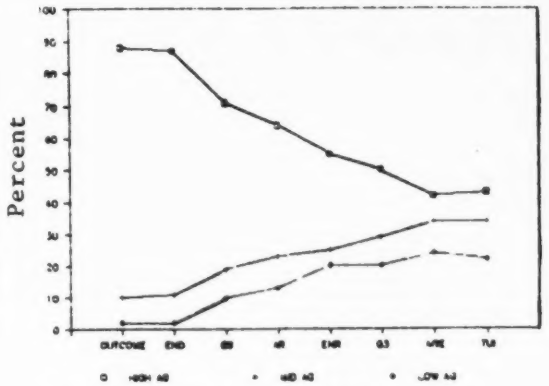

Figure 2. Alumni Gifts for All Institutions

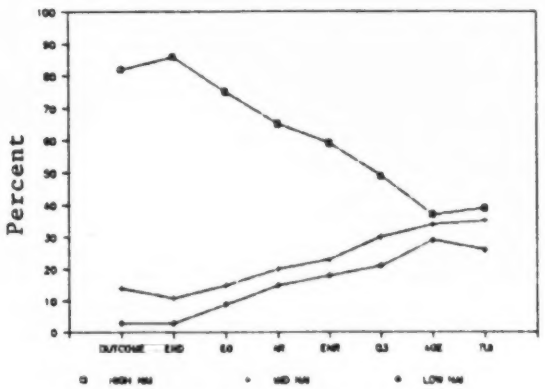

Figure 3. Non-Alumni Gifts for All Institutions.

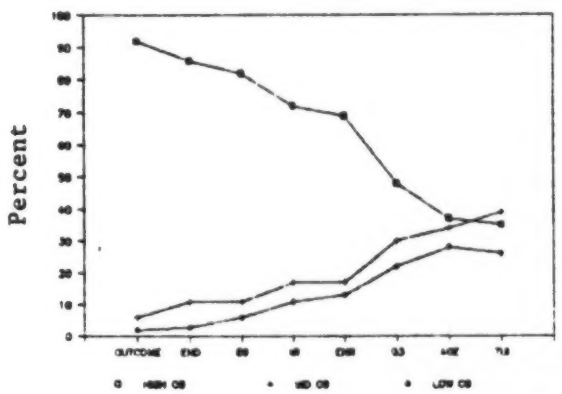

Figure 4. Corporate Gifts for All Institutions

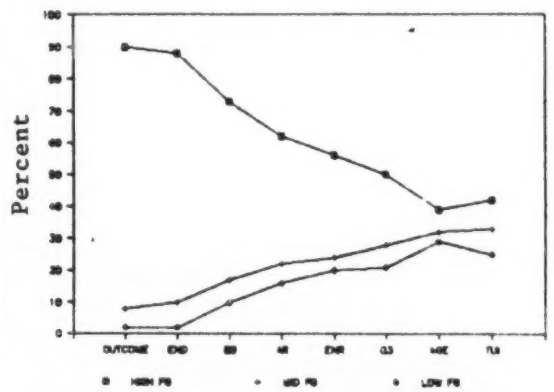

Figure 5. Foundation Gifts for All Institutions

variables but age and tuition. The high group clearly has the greater portion of resources associated with age and tuition, but the differences for high, middle, and low groups are not as dramatic for these variables. Although the middle group had higher levels for outcomes and all variables than the low group, the differences between middle and low groups are not substantial.

The profile in Figure 1 also indicates that some institutional characteristics, such as endowment and general expenditures, are more strongly related to outcomes than some others. This is a graphic representation of the correlation coefficients of these institutional characteristics with outcomes. For instance, r = .732 (significant at .001) for endowment and total voluntary support for all institutions, while r = .144 (non-significant) for tuition and total voluntary support.

The profiles for separate donor groups (Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5) do not differ dramatically from the profile for total voluntary support and suggest that relationships of outcomes and institutional characteristics are similar regardless of the kind of donor.

Figures 6 and 7 display two profiles for all private institutions, and Figures 8 and 9, for all public institutions. These profiles suggest that relationships of outcomes and characteristics do not substantially differ across private and public institutions. Profiles for other donor groups for these sets of institutions are not shown because of their close similarity to those presented.

If we assume that the common notion about relationships of institutional characteristics to fund raising outcomes is true, all profiles in Figures 1 through 9 display the patterns we would expect to find, although disaggregating institutions by status results in some minor

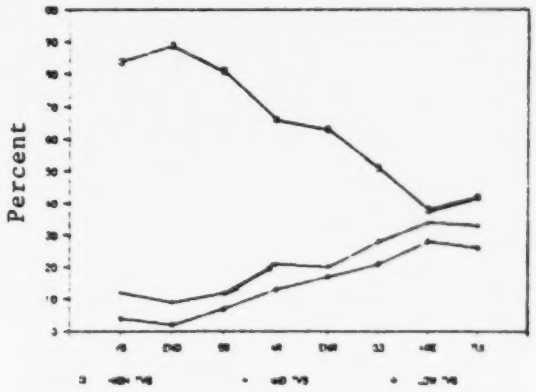

Figure 6. Total Voluntary Support for All Private Institutions

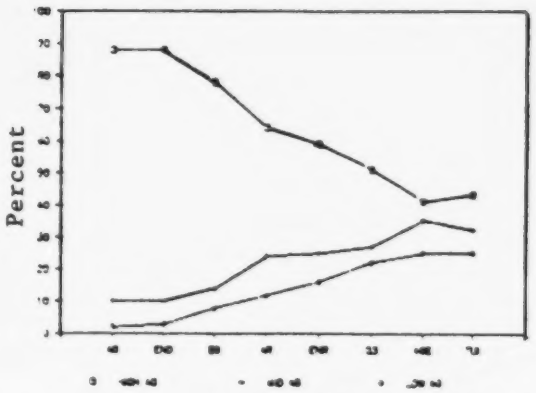

Figure 7. Alumni Gifts for All Private Institutions

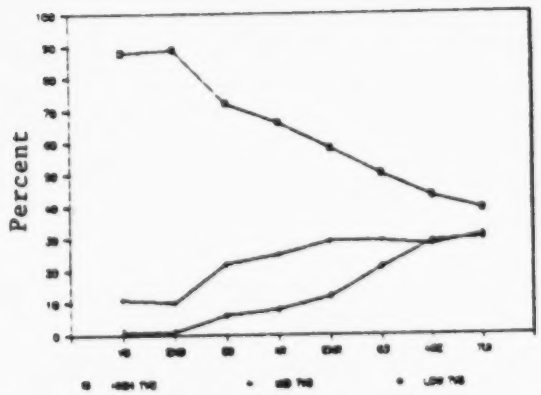

Figure 8. Total Voluntary Support for All Public Institutions

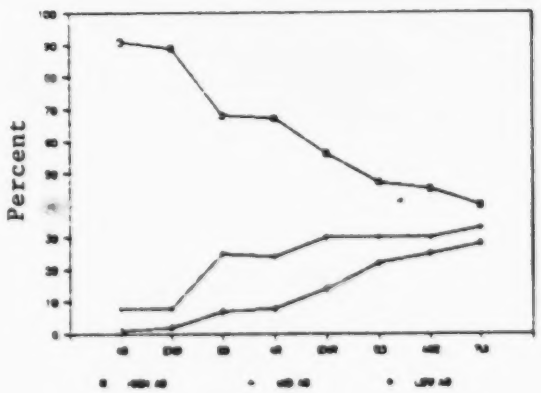

Figure 9. Alumni Gifts for All Public Institutions

differences. However, profiles disaggregated by type of institution, presented in the following section, tell a much more complex story.

Scoring similarities. In order to rate empirically how a given profile was similar to the expected pattern, we devised a scoring system. Each profile has 24 data points: eight variables times three levels (except for profiles for public two-year institutions, which have 21 data points: seven variables times three levels). For each profile we counted the number of data points which appeared in the correct position (i.e., high in the top position, middle in the middle, and low in the bottom position) without regard to distance between levels. Data points in correct position for outcome, endowment, and general expenditures each received 5 points; all others, 1 point each. This scoring system reflects the differential strength of correlation coefficients of variables with outcomes, as well as the significance of the variable as it appears in expected patterns in Figures 1 through 9.

The total possible score is 60 points (or 57 for public two-year). All profiles in Figures 1 through 9 were scored at 60 except that for corporation gifts for all institutions (Figure 4) which received a score of 58. In this profile, two data points are out of position: for tuition, institutions at the middle level had a greater percentage of total tuition resources than institutions at the high level.

Total points for profiles for institutions by type ranged from a low of 18 to a high of 60. Based on scores, overall appearances, and comparisons with profiles in Figures 1 through 9, we placed the profiles for types of institutions into three categories, labeled EXPECTED (E) -- 56 to 60 points; APPROACHING THE EXPECTED (A) -- 46 to 55 points; and MAVERICK (M) -- 18 to 45 points. Examples of profiles for each category appear in a

later section.

Table 3 contains pattern labels for profiles in each type of institution (50 profiles). Of the total, 19 or 38% (15 for private and four for public) were scored at 56 or above and were labeled EXPECTED. Sixteen or 32% (three for private and 13 for public) were between 46 and 55 points and were labeled APPROACHING THE EXPECTED. Profiles in this category

Table 3

Pattern Labels for Types of Institutions by Donor Group

Type	Total Vol. Supp.	Alumni	Non-Alumni	Corporation	Foundation	Overall for Type	
						Label	Pts.
Research							
Private	E	E	E	E	E	E	(58.8)
Public	M	A	A	M	A	A	(47.8)
Doctoral							
Private	A	M	M	A	M	A	(47.8)
Public	A	A	A	A	A	A	(52.6)
Comprehensive							
Private	E	E	E	E	E	E	(58.0)
Public	A	A	A	M	A	A	(50.6)
Baccalaureate							
Private	E	E	E	E	E	E	(57.6)
Public	E	E	A	E	E	E	(57.2)
Two-Year							
Private	M	A	M	M	M	M	(31.0)
Public	M	M	M	M	M	M	(40.0)

NOTE: To account for fewer available data points for public two-year institutions, we simply added three points to each profile score. In no case did the extra points change the category in which the profile fell, although the average for type is inflated.

have some features of the EXPECTED pattern but also have important differences. In a larger or different set of institutions, the patterns for these institutions might more closely resemble the expected, or it might be that the common notion is true more or less, with random deviations or deviations occurring in certain types of institutions at certain outcome levels or for certain donor groups.

Fifteen profiles or 30% (seven for private and eight for public) make up the MAVERICK category, so labeled because these profiles do not support the commonly-held notion about the relationships of institutional characteristics and voluntary support outcomes. In fact, one subset within this category not only does not support the commonly-held belief but also seems to negate it.

The fact that different patterns emerge when institutions are disaggregated by type is the most obvious point to be made about the overall patterns. Profiles in the three categories differ from each other and from profiles for all institutions and for institutions disaggregated only by private/public status. Other observations are:

1. The EXPECTED category appears for only four types of institutions, only one of which is of public status: private research, private comprehensive, private baccalaureate, and public baccalaureate.

2. The MAVERICK category appears for five types: public research, private doctorate, public comprehensive, private two-year, and public two-year.

3. Average overall scores (across all profiles within types) range from a high of 58.8 for private research universities to a low of 31.0 for private two-year colleges. These scores may be a rough measure of the degree to which the common notion about the relationships of institutional

characteristics and voluntary support outcomes "fits" for each institutional type.

4. The average overall scores for profiles for all private institutions and all public institutions are 50.6 and 49.0, respectively, indicating that status alone is not useful in estimating voluntary support outcomes -- something that was not the case perhaps as recently as ten years ago. Nevertheless, as later discussions will show, private or public status, when combined with other variables, does appear to be associated with relationships of outcomes and institutional characteristics.

Overall, the comparison of patterns indicates that the common notion about relationships of voluntary support outcomes to institutional characteristics does not apply consistently to all institutions with all donor groups.

Comparisons by Types of Institutions and Donor Groups

In general, the profiles are not helpful for drawing specific conclusions about relationships of institutional characteristics and voluntary support outcomes in individual types of institutions nor for separate donor groups. However, the profiles demonstrate that there are differences in these relationships across institutions and donors.

Figures 10 through 29 display profiles with highest and lowest point scores for each of ten types of institutions. The total point score and pattern label is shown in the upper right corner of each profile. Among the profiles with highest and lowest scores for private institutions are seven in the EXPECTED category, one in APPROACHING THE EXPECTED, and one in MAVERICK. For public institutions, there is one in the EXPECTED, five in APPROACHING THE EXPECTED, and four in MAVERICK. This breakdown indicates that private institutions are more likely to show the expected

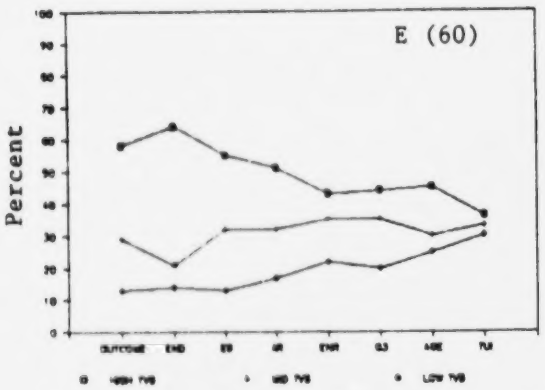

Figure 10. Total Voluntary Support for Private Research Universities

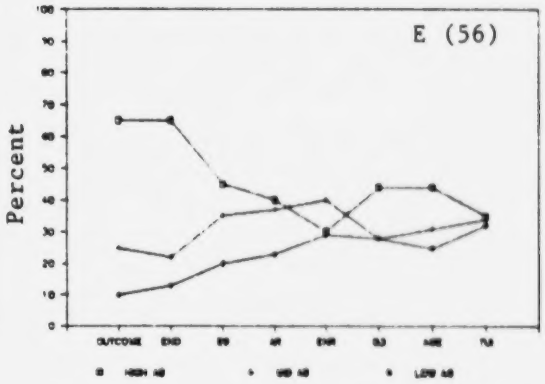

Figure 11. Alumni Gifts for Private Research Universities

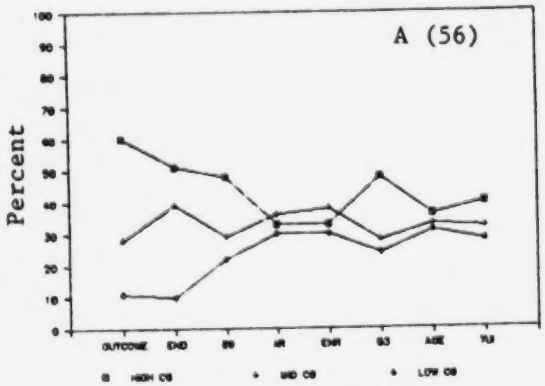

Figure 12. Corporate Gifts for Private Doctoral Universities

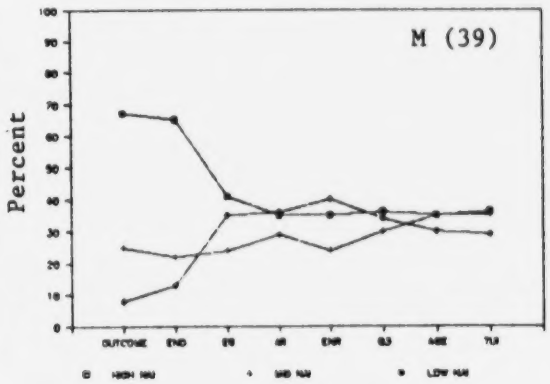

Figure 13. Non-Alumni Gifts for Private Doctoral Universities

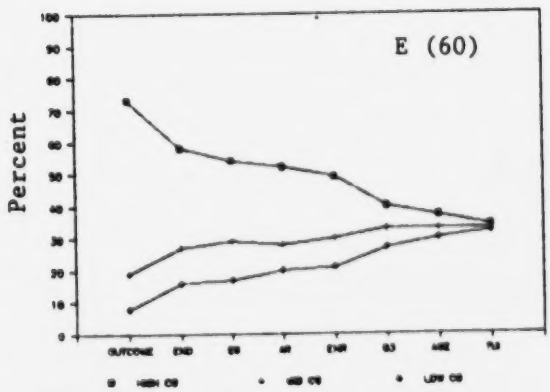

Figure 14. Corporate Gifts for Private Comprehensive Universities

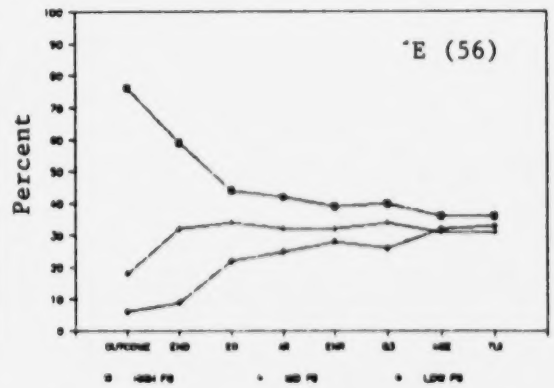

Figure 15. Foundation Gifts for Private Comprehensive Universities

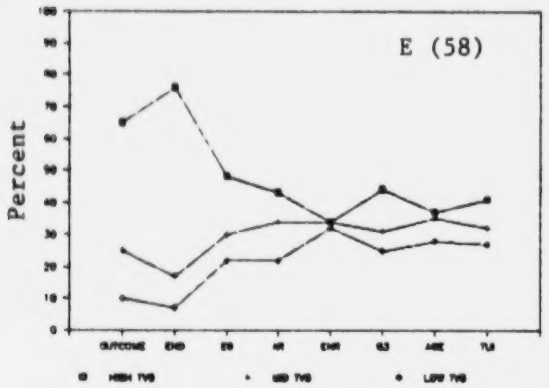

Figure 16. Total Voluntary Support for Private Baccalaureate Colleges

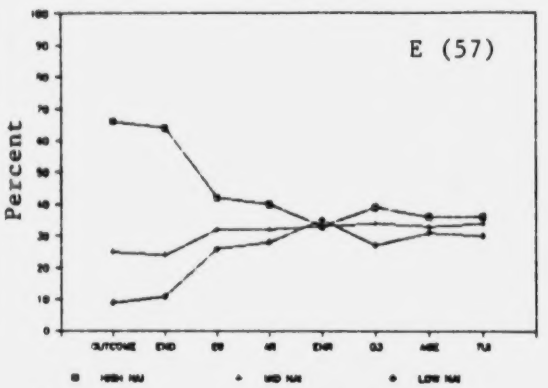

Figure 17. Non-Alumni Gifts for Private Baccalaureate Colleges

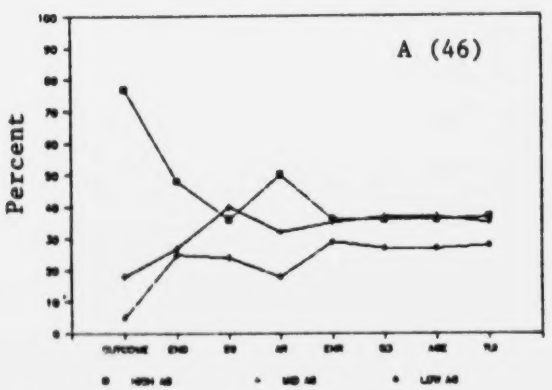

Figure 18. Alumni Gifts for Private Two-Year Colleges

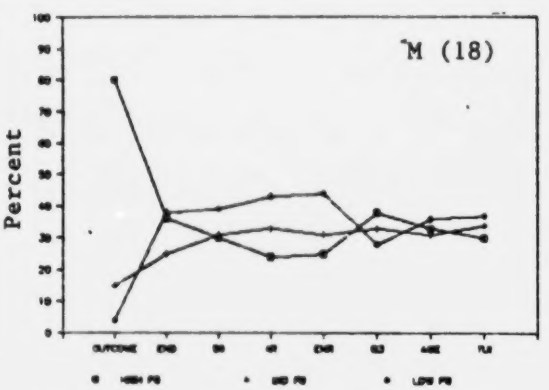

Figure 19. Foundation Gifts for Private Two-Year Colleges

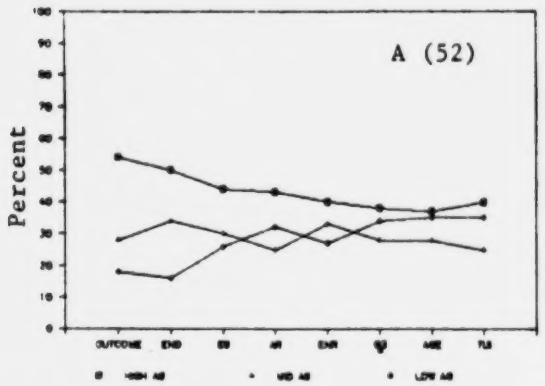

Figure 20. Alumni Gifts for Public Research Universities

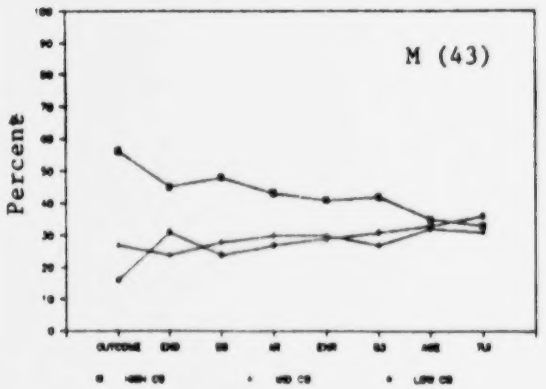

Figure 21. Corporate Gifts for Public Research Universities

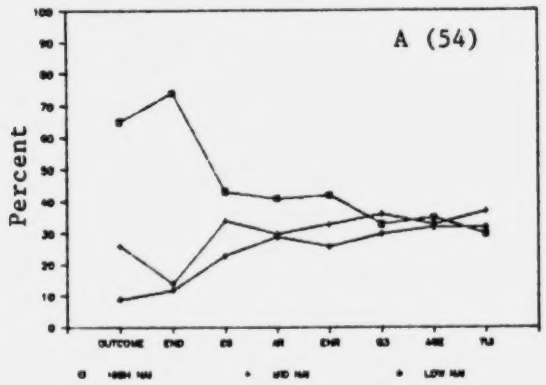

Figure 22. Non-Alumni Gifts for Public Doctoral Universities

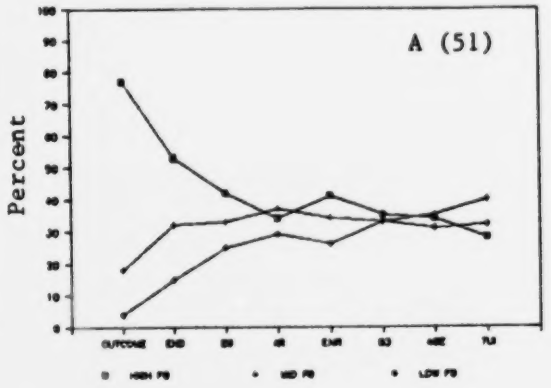

Figure 23. Foundation Gifts for Public Doctoral Universities

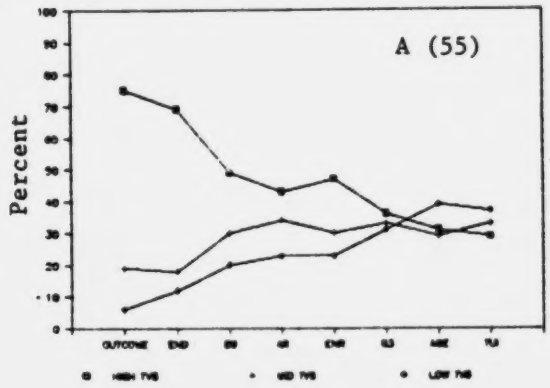

Figure 24. Total Voluntary Support for Public Comprehensive Universities

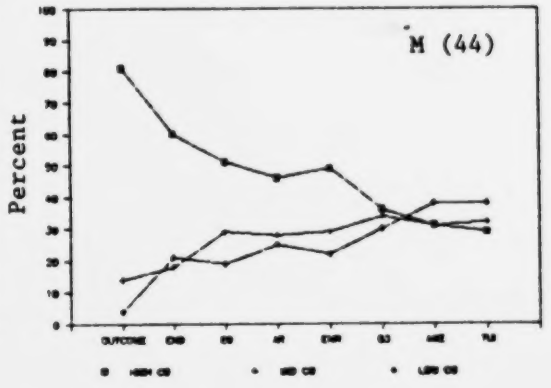

Figure 25. Corporate Gifts for Public Comprehensive Universities

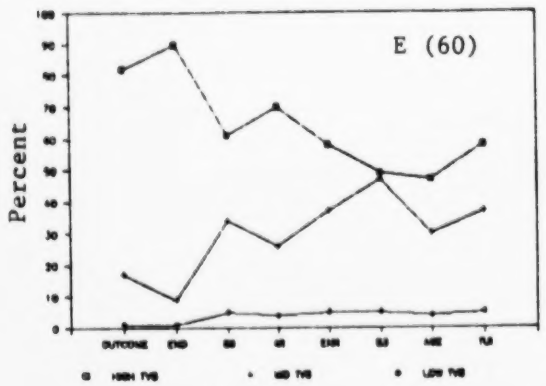

Figure 26. Total Voluntary Support for Public Baccalaureate Colleges

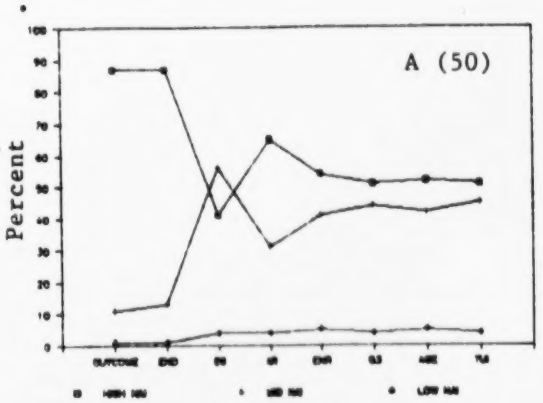

Figure 27. Non-Alumni Gifts for Public Baccalaureate Colleges

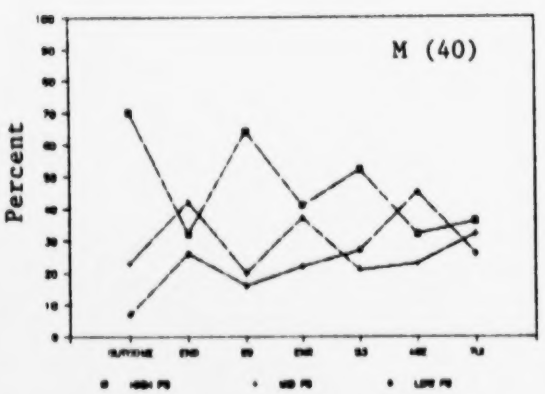

Figure 28. Foundation Gifts for Public Two-Year Colleges

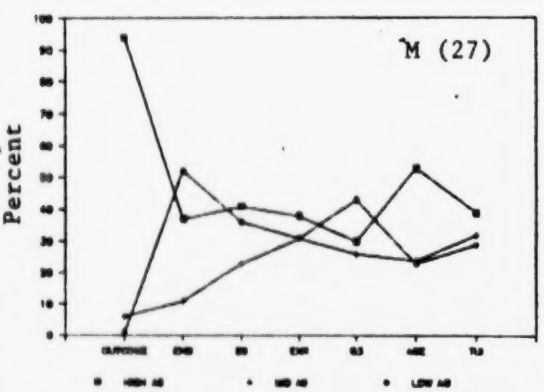

Figure 29. Alumni Gifts for Public Two-Year Colleges

relationships than public. The profiles suggest either that institutional characteristics are more strongly associated with fund raising outcomes in private institutions than in public, or that we do not yet have sufficient data to conceptualize more accurately these relationships in public institutions. Over time, as fund raising becomes a more traditional function in public institutions, it may be that the data will more clearly support the current prevailing notion or that new conceptual understanding of these relationships will emerge.

Private institutions -- most especially research and comprehensive universities and baccalaureate colleges -- are those providing the strongest support for the common notion. Profiles for these institutions indicate that the common notion about relationships between institutional characteristics and voluntary support outcomes has more than minimal basis in fact.

Interestingly, profiles for the private doctoral universities in this study were second only to two-year colleges in overall dissimilarity to profiles for all private institutions. The profile for alumni gifts (not shown) in these institutions indicates that both the middle and low groups have a greater share of resources implied by alumni of record and enrollment than the institutions with the highest share of alumni gifts. This suggests that the private doctoral universities with the highest outcomes in alumni gifts are the smaller institutions of this type and that they get larger gifts from fewer alumni. This is not a particularly unlikely nor unheard of situation, but the profile indicates a particularly clear exception to the "rule" that higher outcomes in voluntary support are found in institutions with higher levels of important resources. The profile also suggests that overall fund raising success can be a complex

and subtle phenomenon.

Profiles for private two-year colleges (Figures 18 and 19) are the least informative for private institutions, suggesting most strongly that there are factors other than basic institutional characteristics which differentiate the successful institutions of this type from the less successful. These profiles also suggest that fund raisers and presidents at institutions of this type with formative programs ought to be the ones to most strenuously avoid the restrictions of the common notion.

Profiles for public institutions generally provide less consistent support for the common notion, although several features of the profiles for private institutions also appear for public institutions (e.g., especially relationships of the high group for endowment, general expenditures, enrollment, and others). Middle and low groups in public institutions are not as clearly differentiated as in profiles for private institutions.

The profiles for public baccalaureate institutions (Figures 26 and 27) are surprising. There is no immediate explanation for why these extreme patterns emerge for this type. On all profiles for this type high and low groups were so similar that we first assumed that the group of institutions in the low group for one donor would be the same institutions constituting the low group for other donors. This was not the case, however, as there were a number of institutions which are among the highest for one donor and the lowest for another. Although these profiles were scored by the "rules" applied to all others, the extreme relationships found on these compared to all others suggest a phenomenon perhaps beyond the common notion. Earlier it was reported that overall average score for profiles for all private and all public institutions were 50.6 and 49.0, respectively. The atypically high scores of profiles for public baccalaureate colleges over-

inflate the summary score for all public institutions, masking the extent of overall differences for private and public institutions.

For separate donor groups across all types of institutions, profiles for alumni gifts and corporation gifts tend to have higher point scores than profiles for non-alumni gifts and foundation gifts. However, the profiles for alumni and corporation gifts are not necessarily similar to each other within types of institutions. Other study results indicate, by means of comparisons of correlation coefficients and regression equations, that alumni and corporation donors are the two most dissimilar groups. In every analysis we conducted of outcomes for separate donor groups, we found evidence that donor groups differ in their relationships to the independent variables studied and that institutions with high outcomes for one donor were not necessarily those with high outcomes for any other nor for total voluntary support.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This analysis provides information about the relationships of institutional characteristics to voluntary support outcomes for all institutions and for institutions by type, as well as for the relationships of institutional characteristics to outcomes with specific donor groups.

The commonly-held idea that institutions with higher levels of certain institutional characteristics acquire larger amounts of voluntary support does not appear to be true for all institutions nor with all donor groups. The expected relationship occurs far more frequently in private institutions than in public ones. This may suggest that we know a great deal more about how institutional characteristics are related to voluntary support outcomes in private institutions. It may also suggest that institutional characteristics are more closely related to voluntary support outcomes in private institutions than in public.

The profiles indicate that the more aggregated the data are, either by types of institutions or by donor groups, the more likely we are to find the expected pattern. Paton (1985) observed that "inappropriate aggregation" of voluntary support outcomes is a serious flaw in overall fund raising research. The results of this analysis suggest that Paton's concerns were well-founded and that inappropriate generalizations of what is true for some institutions with some donors may be a serious flaw in our basic conceptualization of fund raising success.

The importance of the research presented here is that there are gaps in our understanding of effectiveness in higher education fund raising and that we may not even be certain where the gaps are. Additional empirical study is necessary to separate fact from myth, to integrate experience-based and research-based knowledge, and to identify better methods for evaluating effectiveness in fund raising. It is particularly important that policymakers in individual institutions, especially in those where fund raising programs are nascent or under-developed, use and conduct internal research to validate their assumptions about the institution's limits and potential for higher outcomes in voluntary support.

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